

Washington, DC -- Today, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-7), a former 3-Star Admiral, released the following statement on passage of H.R. 1591, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act:

"I fully supported this supplemental because it changes the strategy in Iraq and ensures that America will be more secure.

"Most importantly, it includes a date certain, which will serve as the necessary leverage to have the Iraqis accept the reality of the personal consequence of not assuming responsibility for their nation. A date when Iraqis will know that they can no longer rely on the culture of dependency and that their leaders must be responsible for their own country; they must step up to the plate and make the difficult political compromises that will stop the civil war we are currently refereeing and bring about stability.

"A date certain also changes regional nations incentives', particularly Syria's and Iran's, toward stability when the United States is no longer in the midst of the civil war, and these nations will have to bear the consequences of further strife, with refugee flows to their countries, and the possibility that these relatively allied nations could then be joined into a proxy battle to their detriment, as one is primarily Sunni and the other Shia.

"This supplemental changes all the dynamics because it moves us forward to a different strategy that will help us go where we need to go. It begins a true exit strategy, so we can begin to apply our resources elsewhere in the world: where terrorists are and where emerging nations, such as in the Western Pacific, have growing political and economic interests, and therefore influence, that may challenge ours.

"I remain strongly concerned that we are currently involved in an inconclusive, open-ended involvement within a country where the long term benefits do not match what we need to reap.

"This is why this vote on the supplemental was so important. It changes courses and improves America's security."

H.R. 1591, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act, passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 218 to 212. It now awaits action by the Senate.

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives.*

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